



Innovative mental health support

*for student transition
to Higher Education*



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN

Office for
Students



THURSDAY 17 MARCH 2022

| Welcome

Opened by Professor Neal Juster, the University of Lincoln Vice Chancellor, this conference will provide informative sessions, key findings and learnings at the culmination of the Office for Students (OfS) funded, University of Lincoln led project Transitioning students effectively: A student led approach to mental health support, with guest sessions on innovative student mental health support from the NHS, LiNCHigher, Bishop Grosseteste University, Dr Roger Bretherton and Lincoln Students' Union Wellbeing Network.



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| Schedule

8.15am
– 8.55am

Registration,
Coffee and
Networking

8.55am
– 9.00am

Welcome

Jacqueline Mayer
Head of Student Services
Project Director: Wellbeing
University of Lincoln

9.00am
– 9.15am

Opening Remarks

Professor Neal Juster
Vice Chancellor
University of Lincoln

9.15am
– 9.45am

Transitioning Students Effectively: Project Overview

Zoë Mills
Project Manager
Lincoln Higher Education
Research Institute (LHERI)
University of Lincoln

9.45am
– 10.45am

Transitioning Students Effectively: outreach and activities undertaken by the Transitional Wellbeing Team

Transitional Wellbeing Team

2.00pm
– 2.30pm

Enabling students to co-produce a chatbot to enhance digitally enabled care at the University of Lincoln

Leanne Taylor
Business Development Officer
Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

2.30pm
– 3.00pm

Evaluating Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice in Higher Education

Roger Bretherton
Associate Professor
School of Psychology
University of Lincoln

3.00pm
– 3.30pm

Refreshments and Networking



10.45am
– 11.15am

Refreshments
and Networking

11.15am
– 12.15pm

**Making mental health relatable using
student-created content**

Digital Student Experience Team

12.15pm
– 12.45pm

**Lincoln Students' Union
Wellbeing Network**

SU Student Leaders

12.45pm
– 2.00pm

Buffet Lunch
and Networking

3.30pm
– 4.00pm

**Transition to HE: How raising
aspirations creates better transition
journeys**

Jonathan Lidster
Project Lead Manager
LiNCHigher
Bishop Grosseteste University

4.00pm
– 4.30pm

**Bishop Grosseteste University:
Student support and responses to
mental health**

Phil Davis
Head of Student Support
Bishop Grosseteste University

4.30pm
– 4.45pm

Final remarks and close

Tom Wright
Director of Digital Student Experience
Project Director: Digital
University of Lincoln

| Project Directors



John Sharp

Head of Lincoln Higher Education Research Institute (LHERI)

Project Director

Management, Impact and Evaluation

John Sharp is Professor of Higher Education and Head of LHERI at the University of Lincoln and has worked for over 25 years in Higher Education, specialising in mixed-methods research design and the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. John is particularly interested in the relationship between student engagement, approaches to learning, achievement-related emotions and academic attainment.



Jacqueline Mayer

Head of Student Services

Project Director

Wellbeing (Chair in morning)

Jacqueline is Head of Student Services at the University of Lincoln and has 25 years of experience working in Higher Education. She is currently responsible for overseeing the development of Student Support, Student Wellbeing, the Multi-Faith Chaplaincy and English Language support for all enrolled students at the university.



Tom Wright

Director of Digital Student Experience

Project Director

Digital (Chair in afternoon)

Tom has worked in digital and web since 1998 in a variety of roles, for a range of organisations including the NHS, Rolls-Royce and the University of Nottingham. As Director of Digital Student Experience at the University of Lincoln, Tom works collaboratively with Schools and Departments to enhance the student experience using digital tools and peer-to-peer digital content, with the ultimate aim of easing transition, reducing attrition and maximising outcomes.

| Opening Remarks



Professor Neal Juster

Vice Chancellor, University of Lincoln

Professor Neal Juster joined the University of Lincoln as Vice Chancellor in October 2021. He came from the University of Glasgow where he had held the position of Senior Vice-Principal and Deputy Vice Chancellor since 2013 having been appointed as Vice-Principal (Strategy & Resources) in 2007. Neal's primary responsibilities at Glasgow were to lead the development and implementation of the University's strategic plan; the University's transformation programme; and the master-planning of the £1bn redevelopment of the Gilmorehill campus.

Immediately prior to appointment to the University of Glasgow, Neal was Pro Vice-Principal at the University of Strathclyde (2006-7). In this role he had strategic oversight of the academic requirements of the University Estate, the University's Cultural Activity and the Office of Marketing and Communication.

Other academic appointments include Dean of the Faculty of Engineering (2002-6) and Head of Department in the Department of Design, Manufacture and Engineering Management (1997-2002), University of Strathclyde and Senior Lecturer in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Leeds (1988-97).

Neal received his BSc and PhD in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Leeds and is a Fellow of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE). He was a past Chair, of the IMechE Academic Standards Committee, the committee responsible for accrediting relevant undergraduate degree programmes. He is currently a member of the QAA Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers.

He is a Director of UL Learning Resources Ltd, Riseholme Park Farms Ltd, ULEX and UoL Services Ltd.

9:00



Zoë Mills

Project Manager

Zoë Mills is the Project Manager within the Lincoln Higher Education Research Institute (LHERI) at the University of Lincoln, with overall responsibility for the OfS funded project Transitioning students effectively: A student led approach to mental health support. Prior to this, Zoë worked for the Student Wellbeing Team at the university for almost 17 years and has a particular interest in improving the quality of the student experience including widening participation and student engagement.

Transitioning Students Effectively: Project Overview

If unprepared, university life can impact massively with the changes that it brings. Becoming truly independent for the first time, leaving a familiar home and environment could cause anxiety for many individuals. Navigating new cities and campuses, managing finances, changes to routine and academic learning alongside new social interactions, for some, can prove vast steps to take.

The University of Lincoln undertook a project, funded by the Office for Students, offering a city-wide approach, supporting students ahead of arriving at university. It extended and enhanced the provision of support on offer, working collaboratively with colleagues across

the university and project partners in the wider community. The project developed a peer-to-peer approach to support students, their wellbeing and mental health, with a focus on the transition from school or college to university.

This session will provide an overview of the project, its aims, main activities and highlights from work undertaken. It will also discuss challenges faced by the team, key findings and recommendations for practitioners or future projects to consider, as well as initiatives from the project that will remain as its 'legacy'.



lheri.lincoln.ac.uk

9:15





Transitioning Students Effectively: Outreach and activities undertaken by the Transitional Wellbeing Team

This session will look at the activities the Transitional Wellbeing Team undertook throughout the course of the project, including outreach work in schools and colleges, navigating the difficulties of the Covid-19 pandemic and creating resources to help support students in their transition, beyond the time boundaries of the project.

The Transitional Wellbeing team worked with the University of Lincoln's Student Wellbeing Centre to help deliver the Wellbeing Orientation Welcome (WOW) Summer School during the time of the project in July 2019, September 2020 and July 2021. This session will look at the outcomes of WOW and will include information on our 'How to Run a Successful Summer School' resource for higher education institutions.



mentalhealthproject.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/schools-outreach/



Tom Larken

Transitional Wellbeing Education Officer

Tom worked as a Transitional Wellbeing Education Officer for the project, based within the Student Wellbeing Centre at the University of Lincoln. Tom supported school outreach sessions with design and delivery of resources and at the beginning of each term, helped to deliver Fresh Start workshops for those transitioning into university. Working alongside colleagues within Student Wellbeing, he helps to deliver the WOW Summer School for prospective students who may find the transition to university life more challenging.



Megan McAuliffe

Transitional Wellbeing Advisor

During the project, Megan worked as a Transitional Wellbeing Advisor, based within the Student Wellbeing Centre at the University of Lincoln. Working alongside the Transitional Wellbeing Education Officers and the wider Student Wellbeing team, she helped to produce and deliver outreach sessions within schools and colleges, focusing on preparing for the transition to university. Alongside supporting prospective students who declared a disability or medical condition, Megan also helped with the delivery of the WOW Summer School and Fresh Start workshops for enrolled students.



Danielle Mutch

Transitional Wellbeing Education Officer

As part of the Transitional Wellbeing Team, Danielle worked as a Transitional Wellbeing Education Officer during the project, based within the Student Wellbeing Centre. Danielle supported the project with the design and delivery of school outreach sessions, creating transitional wellbeing resources whilst also having a key role in the planning and delivery of the WOW Summer School.



Making mental health relatable using student-created content

Student-led, relatable content that de-medicalises mental wellbeing is a key factor of engaging the student population. This was shown in Barrable et al.'s study into an online intervention system aimed at supporting mental health, wellbeing and study skills in Higher Education (Barrable et al., 2018). The study found that apps and content which avoid clinical style content are more likely to increase engagement and reduce attrition, and that the design of content is key to engaging and retaining student use. Those who participated in digital peer interactions also appeared to enjoy increased capacity to challenge stigma

and negative attitudes towards mental illness, with the knowledge that others are facing similar difficulties offering empowerment and providing hope (Lawlor and Kirakowski, 2014).

During this student panel, we will be showcasing and discussing the peer-led digital resources and tools that have been created during the project. Panellists will include students from a range of initiatives such as the Fresher Take podcast, videos and the Student Life App. We will explore successes, challenges and learnings that can help to shape future student-led digital content creation.



studentlife.lincoln.ac.uk



**Jasmine
Foley**

Digital Project
Lead



**Talie
Colbourne**

Interim Digital
Project Lead



**Holly
Woollock**

Digital Content
Creative Assistant



**Lucy
Toogood**

Student Digital
Content Creator



**Sally
Hallett**

Student Life Editor



**Owen
Liggins**

Student Digital
Content Creator



**Tori
Wood**

Fresher Take
Podcast Host



**Alex
Shenstone**

Fresher Take
Podcast Host



Lincoln Students' Union Wellbeing Network

This session will introduce the Students' Union Wellbeing Network, focusing specifically on the network as a peer-level resource to educate, raise awareness, and signpost students to further resources within the Students' Union on wellbeing matters in their transition to university.

We realise that a student's transition to university provides invaluable lessons in being able to recognise, maintain, and improve their own wellbeing. The Wellbeing Network aims to support this transition wherever possible.

Consisting of a Community Officer and three Wellbeing Leads, the Wellbeing Network support our Vice President Wellbeing and Community in facilitating improvements to student life regarding their mental, physical, and sexual health.

The Wellbeing Network actively support the VP in delivering campaigns and gathering student feedback, developing dynamic projects to address the most current concerns of our students. Previous campaign examples include

our Fresher's Health and Wellbeing Fayre, Reclaim the Night, and supplying students with personal safety alarms.

The Network also promote SU activities which benefit student wellbeing and strengthen individual support networks in peer communities, such as the Feel Good Programme, Societies, and Volunteering. These initiatives give students the opportunity to try new things, broaden their friendship and support networks, develop new skills, and give back to the wider community.

One of the main services the Wellbeing Network signpost to is the Students' Union Advice Centre, which has a team of trained Advisors who provide impartial and confidential advice, support, and representation independent of the University. Areas covered include academics, housing, finance, and welfare.



**Harriet
Kennedy**

VP Wellbeing and
Community



**Kelly
Quinton-Jones**

Community
Officer



**Niamh
Howard**

Mental Health
Lead



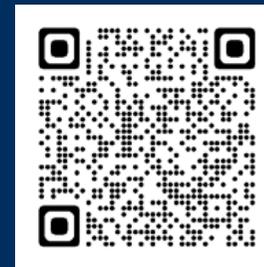
**Faith
Jones**

Sexual Health
Lead



**Alice
Weston**

Physical Health
Lead



lincolnsu.com/wellbeing-network



Enabling students to co-produce a chatbot to enhance digitally enabled care at the University of Lincoln

This session will demonstrate how Leanne and the team partnered with systems across the Lincolnshire Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to accelerate the use of a Digital Self-Management Platform, with co-production from students at the University of Lincoln.

The project connected 16,000 students with a digital platform – VitruCare, to enable them to maintain good health and wellbeing. This provided access to Student Wellbeing services, the GP Practice, a 'Chatbot' and the 24/7 Mental Health Helpline, all from their own device.

Students co-produced the design, and they were able to contribute to the development, for example amending terminology based on their feedback. Students tested the proof of concept and accelerated the build as result of COVID-19.



Leanne Taylor

Business Development Officer
Lincolnshire Partnership NHS
Foundation Trust

Leanne started working for the NHS in 2010 at United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust where she worked in the Records Department and quickly progressed as an apprentice in 2011. During the last 10 years, Leanne has stepped up into managing projects with Clinical Systems and Risk Management Software. In 2019, the opportunity came to for her to be involved in delivering NHS health digitally with a focus on Mental Health. Using the VitruCare Platform, Leanne has played an integral part of rolling out a digital self-management platform to a wide and diverse range of people in Lincolnshire, including students at the University of Lincoln.

Towards the end of 2021, Leanne progressed into a new role within Lincolnshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust as Business Development Officer for Adult Community Mental Health.

[linkedin.com/in/leannetaylor31](https://www.linkedin.com/in/leannetaylor31)



[vitru-care.com](https://www.vitru-care.com)



Dr Roger Bretherton

Associate Professor
School of Psychology
University of Lincoln

Dr Roger Bretherton is Associate Professor in the School of Psychology, at the University of Lincoln. He is a Clinical Psychologist, an Associate Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, and director of Character Lab Lincoln.

Evaluating Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice in Higher Education

Dr Roger Bretherton, Associate Professor, School of Psychology, University of Lincoln
Dr Rebecca Park, Postgraduate Research Assistant, University of Oxford

Mindfulness-Based Strengths Practice (MBSP) is an eight-session programme that combines mindfulness practice with character strengths psychology (Niemiec, 2014). This presentation summarises the structure and content of the programme, and the outcome of two recent trials of the programme with students at the University of Lincoln. Study one reports the outcome of delivering eight sessions of MBSP with first-year undergraduates in medicine and foundation year science. Participants in the programme reported statistically significant increases in mindfulness, strengths use and self-efficacy, relative to the control condition. These results are of particular

interest for students in the stressful process of transition into first year. Study two repeated the programme in a modified six-session format with second year undergraduate students and yielded similar increases in mindfulness, strengths use, and self-efficacy relative to control; with additional relative increases in resilience, and psychological wellbeing. This demonstrated that the programme could be equally, if not more, effective in a shorter form, and thereby particularly applicable as a short-term wellbeing intervention for undergraduates in transition years.



staff.lincoln.ac.uk/rbretherton

14:30





Transition to HE: How raising aspirations creates better transition journeys

LiNCHigher is a collaborative project, part of a wider national initiative called OfS Uni Connect, funded by the OfS. The overall aim is to increase aspirations amongst young people and achieve the government target of supporting under-represented adults' and young people's access to Higher Education, Apprenticeships and training opportunities. The LiNCHigher consortia consists of the 2 Universities in Lincolnshire, the 6 FE Colleges, and the County Council.

LiNCHigher works with and in 51 schools and colleges to deliver exciting activity programmes and outreach activities, as well as hosting an online training platform, a website for careers information called Future Focus. It also supports community groups and wider communities of under-represented learners, such as GRT students, and learners from a service family background.

This session will be talking about why it is important, particularly working with under-represented students, to positively discuss their transition into Higher Education. LiNCHigher know that there is a connection between good careers education and transition support, with positive mental wellbeing. This session will explore the role that LiNCHigher play, in not just raising aspirations of Lincolnshire's young people and adults towards Higher Education, but how the team also support them with their transition into, and through it, by providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes, to thrive in Higher Education! It will also discuss how LiNCHigher can better support students' transition into Higher Education, and consequently support with their mental wellbeing, by more proactively working with students at an earlier stage in their education.



Jonathan Lidster

Project Lead Manager
LiNCHigher
Bishop Grosseteste University

Jonathan is the Project Lead for the LiNCHigher programme, based at the lead institution Bishop Grosseteste University. Jonathan spent 17 years in London and New York, working in senior executive and leadership roles across economic development and business growth, banking and international publishing before moving back to Lincolnshire within his family in 2018.



thefuturefocus.co.uk



linchigherlearning.co.uk



Phil Davis

Head of Student Support
Bishop Grosseteste University

Phil has worked at BGU since 2004 in the role of Head of Student Support. He has 24 years' experience of working in Higher Education student services roles and was chairperson of the National Association of Student Money Advisers from 2012 to 2014. He wrote *Student Finance for Dummies* published in 2016 and currently represents AMOSSHE at two Student Loans Company stakeholder groups: as a member of the Operations Group, and as chair of the HEBSS Steering Group.

Bishop Grosseteste University: Student support and responses to mental health

Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU) has a long tradition of recruiting students from non-traditional backgrounds. The changes in the sector since 2015/16 with an increased prevalence of students presenting with mental health needs have brought particular challenges to a small institution like BGU. Currently, 23% of BGU's student population have a declared disability, with 15.3% indicating a mental health condition. Students facing a mental health crisis, requiring an immediate and effective response/intervention, represent a distressing and complex challenge to student services teams with limited resource (especially time) and generalist rather than specialist skill sets.

The recent growth in demand for mental health support has led the University to explore

partnership working to provide an effective response despite limited resource available in-house. This, in turn, has led to the adoption of an institution-wide strategy towards mental health and wellbeing, for both students and staff, culminating in engagement with the University Mental Health Charter scheme. The exploration of partnership working with newly emerging agencies has been an important part of this process.

This session will provide an overview of the development of BGU's current support package for mental health, and how the activities developed by the OfS Transitional Mental Health Project are an example of the importance of partnership working for a small Higher Education institution.



bishopg.ac.uk/student/student-mental-health-support

| Project Background

Student mental health is much discussed and increasingly so over recent years. In a 2020 report, UCAS noted that mental health disclosures by students entering higher education had risen by over 450% in the last decade (UCAS, 2021) with many more students choosing not to disclose a diagnosis or concern.

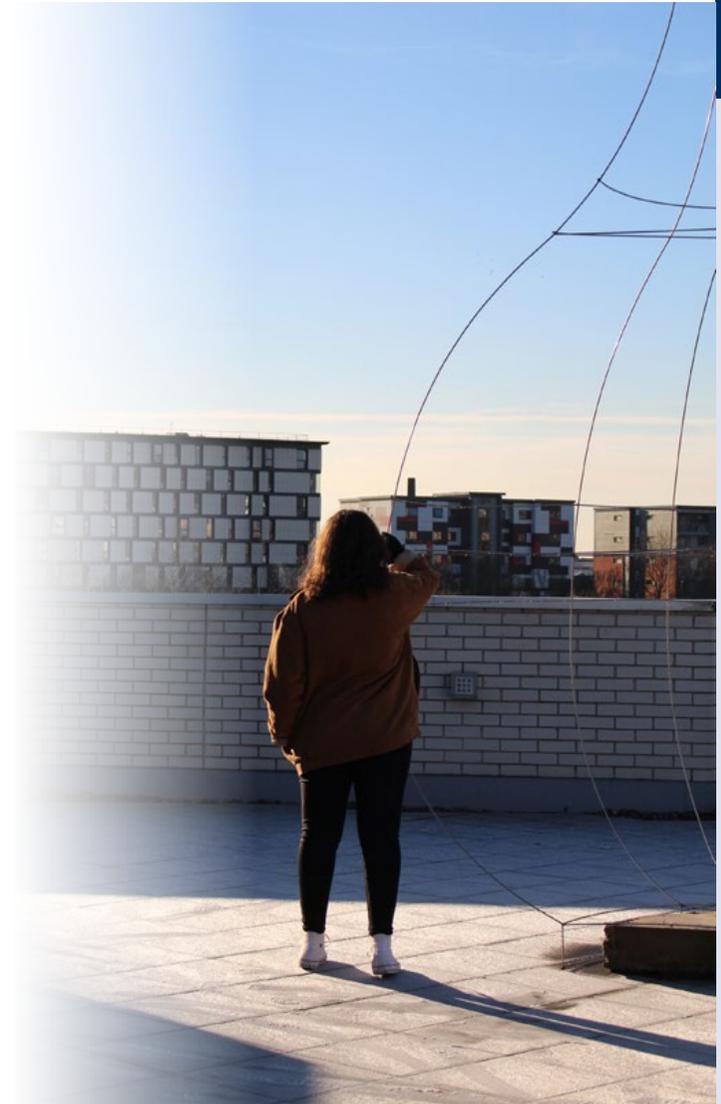
The changes that university life bring can impact greatly on an individual and managing change can be overwhelming. Leaving a familial or familiar home, perhaps for the first time and becoming truly independent can cause anxiety for many. Transition is a pivotal point in prospective students' lives and there is an evidenced need for additional support (Cage et al., 2021).

The University of Lincoln (UoL) took the opportunity to pursue a project offering a city-wide approach, supporting incoming students ahead of arrival. Transitioning students effectively: A student-led approach to mental health support, was an Office for Students (OfS) funded project,

part of a national OfS Mental Health Challenge Competition. It aimed to develop and enable a peer-to-peer approach, supporting student mental health and wellbeing, particularly during the transition from compulsory or further education into university.

The project partnered with other institutions, support teams and services across the city, along with student representatives, who collaboratively developed initiatives to enable students to support themselves and each other. Support, advice and guidance around coping strategies and practical skills for prospective university students, can help with empowerment and aid their resilience, helping them to prepare and feel better able to cope with managing change.

The project was led from UoL by a team of professional services staff and academics and activities were produced and delivered by two UoL based teams, in Student Wellbeing and in Digital Student Experience.



| Transitional Wellbeing

Activities provided by the Transitional Wellbeing team included the successful design, production and delivery of face-to-face and virtual workshops to schools and colleges, on themes such as *'Emotional Fitness'*, *'Getting Ahead'* and *'Next Steps'*. These were developed following focus groups to ensure that the themes and content were relatable and engaging. All school and college-aged students were offered the sessions regardless of their destination, as staff recognised that challenges faced during periods of change can be felt by all.

Outreach workshops and presentations were provided to numerous schools and colleges as far as Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Sessions were provided face-to-face, as well as virtually, with many schools and colleges booking follow up or repeat visits from the team. Evaluation of outreach activities was taken pre- and post- intervention with students rating the sessions and content highly:



'The session was very helpful. I feel more confident now and I know how to deal with my emotions in case of anxiety or depression'

Year 12 student

'Fresh Start' workshops were offered to new students at the start of term and shortly after the festive break, a time when some students can feel overwhelmed. The team wanted the workshops to include homesickness, but also provide supportive advice and information around managing change and when to seek out help or support.

Throughout the project, the Transitional Wellbeing team increased provision of the successful Wellbeing Orientation Welcome or 'WOW' transitional summer school, with three residentials organised, delivered and provided by the team in July 2019, September 2020 and July 2021. The summer school offered a free 3-day, 2-night stay on campus and a comprehensive programme of events for any prospective student where transition may present an additional challenge. During the project, 'WOW' supported 157 students with available evaluation data showing that 'WOW' students' attendance at university was higher than the UoL average and the average for UoL students who disclose a disability. Qualitative data showed that feedback was overwhelmingly positive for its provision, with many students noting it had decreased their anxieties and increased their confidence:



'I'm so grateful for the opportunity, especially in 2020.'

Feedback from WOW 2020 attendee following the (temporary) lifting of national coronavirus restrictions.

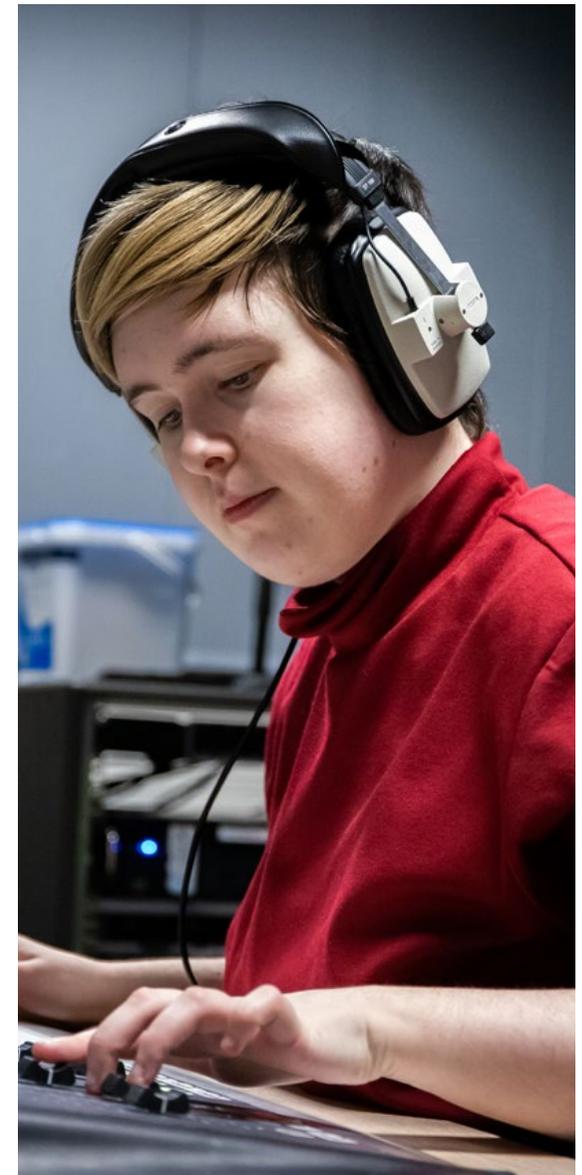
'I have loved WOW because it has helped settle a lot of the nerves that have been growing since applying and receiving an offer.'

Feedback from WOW 2021 attendee.

Digital Student Experience Team

The Digital Student Experience team trialled bespoke student apps and provided student-led content and resources for the project, which were also used within the outreach work of the Transitional Wellbeing team, sharing lived experiences from students ensuring content remained applicable. The Digital team produced regular student led vlogs and established the 'Fresher Take' podcast, all of which helped provide further understanding of university life prior to arrival and during the transitional period. Free access for all UoL students was given to the UniWellbeing hosted 'Student Life' app, with tips and advice on getting the most from their time at university, with particular support ahead of and during transition. Focus groups helped shaped the 'Student Life' app and students shared feedback on their usage, app limitations and content that would be supportive.

Two project videos were also produced, to highlight the work of the project, including an overview and information video covering the services offered by teams. Student co-production workshops were also delivered to project partners Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU), training and supporting their students, enabling them to become content creators for the project, and similar support was also provided to other OfS funded university projects.



Student co-creation has remained key throughout and a large focus point of the original project bid. Students were involved in all aspects, from pupil focus groups within local schools to help shape outreach content, student content creators producing relevant and relatable content and students producing and hosting the popular *'Fresher Take'* podcast series. The project also gained support from the Lincoln Students' Union, whose elected sabbatical officer joined outreach sessions sharing their lived experience. Students worked at the *'WOW'* summer schools, who were previous attendees, supporting pre-entry students and sharing their own stories and experiences, and focus groups were held with university students, on key elements of the project, to feedback and provide thoughts and ideas on content, resources and the *'Student Life'* app.

By using students as content creators, mental health support resources and content produced were therefore less 'medicalised' in their language and nature, and more engaging and effective. Student feedback on Digital content produced indicates in particular, that student created resources are well received:



'It comes from relatable people, a lot of it gives you a feeling that you're not alone in it.'

University of Lincoln student

Highlights

Over 5,300 pupils received direct support via outreach workshops, presentations and education fairs delivered by the Transitional Wellbeing team. All activities delivered by the team had an audience reach of over 17,800, including supporting University of Lincoln virtual sessions, events for partners and stakeholders within the community, the 'WOW' summer schools alongside school and college outreach work.

A total of 55 Student Content Creators and three Student Editors were employed by the project, supporting the Digital Student Experience team, with specifically created content and resources. Across the projects duration 114 articles and 110 videos and vlogs were published, and nearly 8,000 followers were gained on the @UoLStudentLife accounts across all social media platforms.

Dissemination has been key throughout, with numerous presentations, case studies and articles written, and sessions delivered at twelve national

conferences, including the British Educational Research Association (BERA), Go Higher West Yorkshire, the National Association of Disability Practitioners (NADP) and Universities UK amongst others.

Several internal and external reports were produced throughout the project, with the full Evaluation Report for the Office for Students and independent evaluators Wavehill completed in March 2022.

In Summer 2021, the project was delighted to win one of the first *Levelling Up* awards, part of the Rt. Hon Justine Greening's Social Mobility Pledge Initiative, which was a testament to the hard work of staff from all areas of the project throughout its duration.



| Partners

Partnership working was supported with an established Steering Board, formed with project partners and stakeholders, to drive the collaborative nature and ensure that information was shared, and arrangements or decisions agreed collectively.

Collaborative work took place with Bishop Grosseteste University (BGU), particularly in supporting their student community with resources produced for the project. A group of student co-producers were established and remain in place at BGU, who created content for the project. The Digital team also liaised closely with BGU and their Students' Union, sharing relevant content produced onto the 'My Day' app for their student community.

The NHS provided a digital health initiative, 'Vitrucare', as a personalised healthcare app, giving individuals the opportunity to work together with their GP and care team and access all relevant healthcare documents in one place.

The Student Wellbeing Team at the University of Lincoln, in collaboration with the University Health Centre, utilised this app with students registering at the on-site GP practice. The OfS project team also liaised with the NHS team to ensure that the 'Student Life' app, providing transitional resources and student-led content, was provided to students via the 'Vitrucare' platform.

Connections and collaborative work with LiNCHigher, part of the UniConnect network, ensured that further opportunities were made for the project, the Transitional Wellbeing team could widen the reach of their sessions, helping to link in and engage with different schools and colleges across the region. Their team also provided the project ongoing support, by hosting resources and content on their website and utilising in their continued outreach work.



| Legacy

The legacy of the project after it ends, will be in the continued use and provision of resources, available online at the project website:

mentalhealthproject.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk

Resources will also be provided, where appropriate by the University of Lincoln Education Liaison team, within their schools and colleges outreach work. LiNCHigher, host and utilise all resources on their *'Future Focus'* website and their officers will also continue to use project content, where possible, during their outreach activities.

Project initiatives that will remain within the University of Lincoln after its end include the *'WOW'* summer school and *'Fresh Start'* sessions managed by the Student Wellbeing team and the *'Fresher Take'* podcast, *'Student Life'* app and continued student content creation, overseen by the Digital Student Experience team.



mentalhealthproject.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk



Conclusion

The project aimed to develop a peer-to-peer approach in supporting student mental health and wellbeing, particularly during transition from school and college to university. It has achieved most of its aims, despite limitations presented part way from the onset of Covid-19 and subsequent national lockdowns. Those limitations served to help the project team explore other ways in which to provide continued support to students, such as virtual and remote delivery and virtual content production.

A successful outreach programme was established and delivered by the Transitional Wellbeing team, with the unwavering support of the University of Lincoln Education Liaison team and local community partners, such as LiNCHigher to increase contacts and broaden the reach of delivery.

The 'WOW' summer school grew from the 40 student spaces provided initially, to 80 offered across the project duration. The project enabled 'WOW' places to increase, and support is now offered to more students for whom transition and change can be a challenge, including care experienced or estranged students. Feedback showed that attendees were positive about the

provision which makes a positive difference to their ability to manage change ahead of arriving at university.

'Transitioning students effectively: A student-led approach to mental health support' was the project title, and the 'student-led approach' has been key throughout its lifespan. Within the activities of the Digital Student Experience team, student involvement has been actively encouraged and recognised throughout.

The University Mental Health Charter from Student Minds notes that consideration should be given to transition, recognising the evidence of this being a difficult time for students and that *'Pre-entry interventions can have positive impacts for a range of students'* (Hughes and Spanner, 2019, p24). Support provided through the range of activities initiated by projects such as this, are essential for both existing and pre-entry students, even those still in compulsory education who are making future decisions and beginning to take responsibility for their own independence, health and mental wellbeing. It is with support such as this that students can learn from others, learn from lived experiences, learn to manage their emotions and effectively learn to manage change in their lives.





officeforstudents.org.uk

Office for Students

The Office for Students is the independent regulator for higher education in England. Their aim is to ensure that every student, whatever their background, has a fulfilling experience of higher education that enriches their lives and careers. In 2018, the Office for Students announced a major collaborative programme to find innovative ways to address poor mental health among students and improve support across the country. The OfS awarded £6 million, with co-funding of £8.5 million, amounting to a total of £14.5 million investment across 10 collaborative projects which will run until 2022. The programme includes more than 60 different universities, colleges and other organisations – including NHS, police and charities – across the ten projects. The projects and the programme-level evaluation will aim to share effective practice with the sector.





Wavehill

For 30 years Wavehill have provided independent social and economic research for clients in the public, private and third sectors. Our collaborative approach enables clients to make better, more informed decisions about their project or programme, and our evaluation work provides in-depth analysis and insight.

Wavehill have been working with the Office of Students (OfS) since 2019 to understand the impact of the Mental Health Challenge Competition – a fund designed to support Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to develop and test interventions to improve mental health and wellbeing among students. The aim, to assess the impact of the programme across ten lead HEIs, to identify the key lessons learned as well as common challenges experienced during project implementation. This partnership between Wavehill and OfS also sought to support the development of strategic partnerships, centred around student and staff experiences of co-creation, and the dissemination of effective practices across participating HEIs.



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Links

Main project website:

mentalhealthproject.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk

Transitional Wellbeing produced resources:

mentalhealthproject.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/schools-outreach

WOW Summer School information:

studentservices.lincoln.ac.uk/life-at-university/new-students/wow-summer-school

Digital Student Experience produced resources:

mentalhealthproject.blogs.lincoln.ac.uk/digital-student-life

Fresher Take podcast:

studentlife.lincoln.ac.uk/podcasts

Student Life app:

learning.lincoln.ac.uk/learning-lincoln-your/student-life-app



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